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homemakers' chat
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TUESDAY, Sept. 8, 1942

SUBJECT: "THE NATIONAL FOOD PICTURE." Information from agricultural economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Tuesday is question-and-answer-day—the day the letters come out of the mail-bag for answers from scientists of the U. S, Department of Agriculture. Today the question is one that has come over and over again in letters from American homemakers: "What is the food situation going to be in this country during the coming months?"

The job of feeding a family—planning meals, buying and cooking food—is easier if you know something about the foods likely to be plentiful in the next few months, and the foods likely to be not so plentiful, or even scarce. And then, too, it helps to know some of the reasons—why this food may be scarce and that food suddenly so plentiful that it's patriotic to eat more, and why, when crops are the largest on record, only small supplies reach your grocery store.

So here today is a picture of the food situation as high-lighted by agricultural economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Of course, you remember that last fall Secretary Wickard set a national goal for food for freedom in 1942. He asked farmers to grow more of many crops than ever before. Some of these crops are now being harvested. So far the figures show that American farmers are producing at least 9 percent more food than last year, and 25 percent more than the average for the years between '35 and '39. This is more food than the United States has ever produced before, but the demand for food also is greater than ever before. Food needs for Lend-Lease export to our allies, and for our own armed forces have increased enormously since spring.

Last year the country's total food supply was the largest on record. This year the total for civilian use will be about as large. But civilians are eating more food than ever before, because they have money to buy more food. With so many

millions working in war industries, the demand for food is greater than ever. Workers in munition, tank and plane factories need the food that keeps them fit for thi heavy work, and they have the money to buy. So they are using more meat, poultry and dairy products. That's why, even when the country has been producing more of these foods than ever before, they aren't so plentiful everywhere.

You, as the family food manager, want to know which foods will be plentiful during the coming months, and which foods you may have to use less of, or even go without. You need to know where you will have to make a little go far, or where you'll have to use another food in place of the one you are in the habit of eating. Well, the predictions right now are that the plentiful foods will be: cereal or grain foods, lamb and mutton, poultry, dairy products, and most fresh vegetables. These foods will probably be as plentiful for civilian use as they were last year. But other foods that will not be so plentiful are: sugar, of course, and canned foods, beef, pork and possibly lard.

If you are a woman who can take a hint—and, of course, you are—you'll start planning now on the best way to meet the situation. Maybe you'll plan to give your family more whole-grain foods, different kinds of breads and cereals. Maybe you'll study up on the cooking of lamb and mutton--and on different ways to use cheese, eggs, and poultry. If you have leaned heavily on the can opener in getting meals, you may need to plan on other kinds of food. Maybe you live in a part of the country where you can put in a fall garden for more fresh vegetables to substitute for canned. Maybe you need to preserve more foods this fall—can, dry, and store more food at home. You know your own situation and can decide the best way for your particular household to adjust.

But let's get back to further predictions from the economists. During the months ahead the country may use as much fat and oil in food as in 1941. Growers of peanuts, soybeans, and flaxseed are coming through with enormous crops to supply our

need for fats and oils. And production of animal fats will be larger than in 1941. But to offset this, there is the enormous wartime demand for fats and oils, and the fact that our imports have been greatly cut. So if civilians in this country eat as much fat and oil as they have in recent years, they will have to draw heavily on the country's reserve supplies.

Dairy products are on the list of plentiful foods. Milk production is higher. So is the use of milk and dairy products. Supplies of milk and cream are ample. Supplies of cheese and evaporated milk are so large that you help your country by using more of them. These present large supplies of cheese and evaporated milk were built up for Lend-Lease shipment. But the shipping situation has changed, and the emphasis now is on shipping dried skim milk. So cheese and evaporated milk are here for American housewives to take advantage of.

For the rest of the fall fresh vegetables will be plentiful. Though canners are putting out the biggest pack of canned vegetables on record—big packs in glass and many packs of dried and frozen vegetables--a great part of the commercial pack will go to our armed forces, not to civilians. Home canning and other kinds of preservation will have to make up for the cut in commercial supplies.

That's the picture. The economists have drawn it to help you in the job of feeding your family and adjusting to wartime changes in the food supply.

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